

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I have a number of serious reservations concerning H.R. 2428. Although I am supportive of the impetus behind the legislation—encouraging private entities to donate food to nonprofit organizations who distribute food to the needy—I question whether preempting traditional State law prerogatives in this area is desirable.

For more than 200 years tort law has been considered to be a State law prerogative. The States are in the best position to weigh competing considerations and adopt negligence laws which best protect their citizens from harm. The area of food donations is a good illustration of this dynamic. According to the Congressional Research Service's American Law Division, all 50 States have enacted special statutory rights concerning food donations. Not surprisingly, the States have crafted a variety of liability rules—ranging from those who subject all negligent parties to liability, to those who limit liability only to grossly negligent or intentional acts.

Unfortunately, with adoption of this bill, the House will be seeking to impose a one-size-fits-all legal standard for food donors based on the Model Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, 42 U.S.C. Secs. 12671–12673, despite the fact that since its enactment in 1990, only one State has adopted the Model Act's language. This is exactly the type of reckless federalism so many in Congress purport to oppose. Worse yet, in federalizing this standard, Congress will be selecting the most lenient possible standard of negligence. In particular, I would note that the term "gross negligence" is so narrowly defined that it may not include a failure to act which one should have known would be harmful. I believe a standard so loosely drawn constitutes an open invitation to harm to our poorest citizens.

I would also note that Congress is acting on this measure at a time when there has been no demonstrated legal problem. There is no outbreak in frivolous litigation. The proponents arguments for a uniform Federal standard are more based on anecdote than fact.

I am also concerned that to date the legislative process has completely bypassed the Judiciary Committee, which traditionally has had primary jurisdiction for any tort law matters. We should not be in such a rush to pass legislation that we fail to consider the opinions of those Members with relevant expertise.

It is because of concerns such as these that the conference committee on H.R. 2854, the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, determined to reject adopting legislation similar to that before us today. The managers' statement to that legislation wrote:

[t]he Managers declined to adopt a provision that would convert the Model Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (Pub. L. 101-610) to federal law. . . . While the Managers commend the philanthropic intent of such legislation, the Managers understand possible implications of preempting state laws and acknowledge jurisdictional complications. See House Report 104-94 at 405.

It is my hope that as the process moves forward these and other problems can be addressed.

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. GOODLING] that the House suspend the

rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2428, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2428, the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the House stands in recess, subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 25 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess, subject to the call of the Chair.

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina) at 11 o'clock and 12 minutes p.m.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. LUNDREGAN, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2337. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for increased taxpayer protections.

The message also announced that the Senate had passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 3230. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1997 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendments to the bill (H.R. 3230) "An Act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1997 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes," requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. THURMOND, Mr. WARNER, Mr. COHEN, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. COATS, Mr. SMITH, Mr. KEMPTHORNE, Mrs.

HUTCHISON, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. SANTORUM, Mrs. FRAHM, Mr. NUNN, Mr. EXON, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. GLENN, Mr. BYRD, Mr. ROBB, Mr. LIEBERMAN, and Mr. BRYAN, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

The message also announced that the Senate disagrees to the amendment of the House to the bill (S. 1004) "An Act to authorize appropriations for the United States Coast Guard, and for other purposes," agrees to a conference asked by the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: Mr. PRESSLER, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. GORTON, Mr. LOTT, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. ASHCROFT, Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. HOLLINGS, Mr. INOUE, Mr. FORD, Mr. KERRY, Mr. BREAUX, Mr. DORGAN, and Mr. WYDEN; and from the Committee on Environment and Public Works for consideration of Oil Pollution Act issues: Mr. CHAFEE, Mr. WARNER, Mr. SMITH, Mr. FAIRCLOTH, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. LIEBERMAN, and Mrs. BOXER, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

The message also announced that the Senate had passed bills of the following titles, in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 640. An act to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes;

S. 1745. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1997 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes;

S. 1762. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1997 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes;

S. 1763. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1997 for defense activities of the Department of Energy, and for other purposes; and

S. 1764. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1997 for military construction and for other purposes.

DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 474 and rule XXIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 3396.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 3396) to define and protect the institution of marriage, with Mr. GILLMOR in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. When the Committee of the Whole rose on the legislative